

HOW TO CHOOSE A BACKPACK

3 Main Aspects:

- **Backpack capacity:** The size of the pack you'll need is tied to the length of your trip and how much weight and bulk you want to carry.
- **Backpack features:** These are the refinements that affect how the pack works for you.
- **Backpack fit:** Torso length—not your height—matters most.

Types of Backpacks

WEEKEND (1-3 nights; 30-50 liters)

Efficient packers using newer, less-bulky gear can really keep things light on 1- to 3-night trips by using a pack in this range. Be aware that packing light requires self-discipline and careful planning. If you can pull it off, though, the light-on-your-feet rewards are fantastic.

MULTIDAY (3-5 nights; 50-80 liters)

These are the most popular backpacking packs sold at REI and they're an excellent choice for warm-weather trips lasting 3 or more days. Packs in the 50- to 80-liter range are also great for shorter trips where you pack a little more luxuriously or multisport activities like backcountry skiing.

EXTENDED TRIP (5+ nights; 70 liters or larger)



Trips of 5 days or more usually call for packs of 70 liters or more. These are also usually the preferred choice for winter treks lasting more than 1 night. (Larger packs can more comfortably accommodate extra clothing, a warmer sleeping bag and a 4-season tent, which typically includes extra poles.) They're also a good option for folks taking young children. Backpacking because Mom and Dad wind up carrying a lot of kids' gear.

Backpack Features

FRAME TYPE

Internal-frame backpacks: The majority of packs sold at REI today are body-hugging, internal-frame packs where the structure is hidden inside the back panel. They are designed to keep a hiker stable on uneven, off-kilter terrain and may incorporate a variety of load-support technologies that all function to transfer the load to the wearer's hips.

External-frame backpacks: With an external-frame pack, you can see the structure that supports the load: aluminum (usually) hardware on the outside. Because the frame extends beyond the packbag, a backpack like this may be an appropriate choice if you're carrying a heavy, irregular load (like an oversize tent or inflatable kayak). External-frame packs also offer good ventilation and lots of gear organization options.

Frameless backpacks: Ultralight devotees who like to hike fast and light might choose a frameless pack or a climbing pack where the frame is removable for weight savings. But packs without a frame are much more uncomfortable under heavy loads.

VENTILATION

Some packs feature a suspended mesh back panel to combat the sweaty-back syndrome you tend to get with internal-frame packs that ride against your body.

PACK ACCESS

Top-loading openings are pretty standard. Some packs, however, have panel access, so you can unzip the main pack bag without unloading it from the top. Keep in mind that additional features like this tend to add both ounces and dollars.

REMOVABLE DAYBACK

Some packs are designed with a removal daypack that is perfect for shorter trips from camp like summit bids or supply runs during a thru-hike.

POCKETS

Some people like lots, and some people prefer a more streamlined pack. When evaluating pockets, consider the size and placement of each. Hipbelt pockets accommodate small items you want while hiking like a phone, snacks, lip balm or sunscreen. Shovel pockets are basically flaps stitched onto the front of a packbag with a buckle closure at the top.

SLEEPING BAG COMPARTMENT

This is a zippered stash spot near the bottom of a packbag. It's a useful feature if you don't want to use a stuff sack for your sleeping bag.

HYDRATION RESERVOIR

Nearly all packs offer an internal sleeve that holds a hydration reservoir (almost always sold separately), plus one or two portals for the tube.

PADDING



If you're using a lightweight pack with a fairly minimalistic hipbelt and lumbar pad, you can suffer sore spots on your hips, lower back or shoulders. If this is the case for you, consider using a cushier hipbelt.

RAINCOVER

If you expect rain on your trip, this is a good item to carry. Pack fabric interiors are usually treated with a waterproof coating, but water can seep through seams and zippers. Also, the fabric's exterior absorbs some water weight during a downpour.

ATTACHMENT POINTS

Daisy chain: This is a length of webbing stitched to the outside of a pack that provides multiple gear loops for attaching a helmet, tools, wet gear or anything that didn't fit inside the main packbag.

Reinforced crampon patch: This burlier piece of fabric prevents crampon points from gouging holes in the packbag.

Extra gear loops: Gear loops on the hipbelt or low on the pack body are useful for clipping extra gear, especially oversize items like skis.

Backpack Fit

TORSO LENGTH

Some packs are available in multiple sizes, from extra small to large, which fit a range of torso lengths. These ranges vary by manufacturer and by gender. Check the product specs tab for size details of a specific pack.

WAIST SIZE

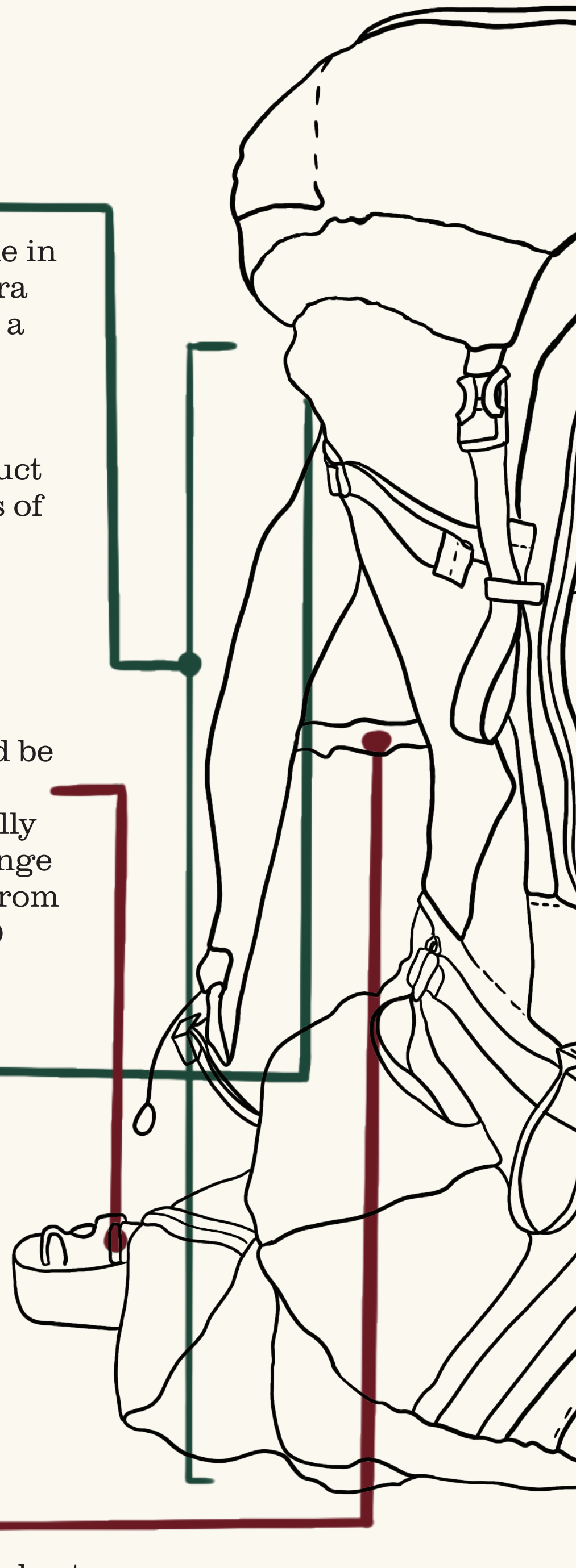
The majority of a backpack's weight—80 percent or more—should be supported by your hips. Backpack hipbelts usually accommodate a wide range of hip circumferences, from mid-20 inches to mid-40 inches or so.

LOAD-LIFTER STRAPS

There are two. Each is attached to the top of the pack frame and stitched into the top of the shoulder straps. Ideally, the load lifters will form a 45-degree angle between your shoulder straps and the pack.

STERNUM STRAP

This strap crosses your chest, allowing you to connect the shoulder straps, which can boost your stability.



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